

Mt. Etna (Sicily) Re-visited

By ANOTHONY VALLETTA F.R.E.S.

Having been encouraged by the number of different species of butterflies taken last year on Mt. Etna, and fascinated by the richness of its flora, this spring I again paid a week's visit from May 1st to the 7th, a week later than last year, hoping to come across different species from those of last year's, but as the saying goes: "Man proposes and God disposes", I not only did not get new species, but bagged 16 species less than last year!

I left Luqa Airport on May 31st at 7.30 p.m. vice 6.00 p.m. as there was a delay in the departure and consequently, I arrived at Catania Airport rather late, but by 9.00 p.m. I was at Hotel Costa at the far end of Via Etna. Again this year I was accompanied by old friend, Sig. Sebastiano Distefano. Our first visit on May 1st was to Adrano 660m. The weather was cloudy with periods of sunshine. By 11.00 a.m. we were on the hunting ground, an area planted with almond and olive trees and clusters of prickly pears. The first insect that came into the net was an *Arctia villica*, a female, which laid several eggs in the pillbox that very night and on the following days. *Euchloe ausonia* was the most common butterfly that morning, but a few *Anthocaris damone* and *A. cardamines* were also on the wing, only a few *G. cleopatra*, *G. alexis*, *Philotes baton*, *C. pamphilus*, *P. rapae* and *Brassicæ* were noticed, the greyish geometer *Lithostege duponcheli* was quite common and two other *A. villica* came our way, but were difficult to take owing to the rough ground especially that part planted with prickly pears (*Opuntia ficus-indica*).

At 1.00 p.m. we left this spot and proceeded to Randazzo 765m, a rough ground with little vegetation in the open spaces, but vineyards stretched all over the fertile fields. This is the ideal place for the *A. damone* but unfortunately, a strong wind was blowing at this height, still a few were flying in the sheltered fields, resting on the various wild flowers. Here again, the *A. ausonia* and *A. cardamines* were on the wing; a single *Lycaenopsis argiolus*, a male, was taken. At 3.00 p.m. it started to rain and kept raining all night and the whole of the following day. Monday May 3rd, we went to Lentini 56m and Carlentini 200m, it was a sunny, warm day, but we had a very poor catch. Last year *Amata marjana* Stgr. and *Synapha moldevica* Esp. were so common yet this time not a single specimen was seen. The most common butterflies, as one would expect at such altitude were *P. icarus* and *C. pamphilus*. A few *P. daplidice*, *P. rapae*, *L. phlaeas*, *L. agestis* and *P. megrera* were also on the wing.

Only one *P. machaon* and *M. phoebe* were seen. Beating the vegetation the following moths were taken: *A. luctuosa*, *A. efformata*, *A. ochrearia*, *P. sanguinalis* and *Z. purpuralis*.

The following Hemiptera were also taken: *Calocoris nemoralis* F and the *f. erythronota* Rbr., *f. exastigma* Rbr., *f.*

hispanica, *F. Calocoris nemolis* F., *f. Picea* Eyr., *Caloris norvegicus* G. M., *Rhinocoris erythropus* L., *Haploprocta sulcicoris* F., *Cercopsis sanguinolenta* Scop., *Coriomeris hirticornis* F., *Eurydema ventrale* Kol., *Holcastathus albigipes* F., *Cydnus aterrimus* Forst. and *Doycoris baccarum* L.

Tuesday, May 4th: A miserable day, cloudy and very misty. We drove to Nicolosi 800m hoping for the best, but there was no improvement at all. Only a few *Chiasma clathrata* L. ssp. *aurata* Turati were on the wing. We went lower down to Pedara 610m but still there was nothing on the wing. Two *C. pamphilus* were disturbed and that was all for the day. At 10.30 a.m. it started to rain and kept on up to late in the evening.

Wednesday, May 5th: It was still cloudy in the morning, but by 1.00 p.m. it cleared up a bit. We drove again to Nicolosi, and we noticed that *P. brassicae*, *P. rapae*, *C. croceus*, *Euch. ausonia*, *A. cardamines*, *A. damone*, *L. phlaeas*, *V. atalanta* and *P. icarus* were quite common; *C. clathrata* was also met with as well as *Hipocrita jacobaeae*. By 3.00 p.m. it became dull again and it started to rain.

Thursday, May 6th: A sunny, warm day after two gloomy days! Our venue was Zafferana 1000m. At first we collected at a lower level where *Anth. cardamines*, *Anth. damone*, *Euch. ausonia* and *P. icarus* were quite common, then we went higher up where we came across *Z. hysipyle latevittata* Vrtv. flying freely in the shade of chestnut trees. *P. napi* and *Pyrgus malvoides modestor* Vrtv. were also on the wing. In this locality one would be fascinated by the predominant yellow colour of the *Spartium junceum*, *Euphorbia biglandulosa*, *E. dendroides*, *Ferula nodosa*, *F. chiliantha*, *Chrysan themum coronaria*, *Calendula arvensis*, *Genista acanthocladus* and *Phlomis fruticosa*. At 11.30 a.m. we moved to Valle di San Giovanni where we came across *P. manni* and *P. napi* and a few *G. alexis* which had already past their best. Only in this locality we came across the *P. manni*.

Friday, May 7th: The weather kept sunny and we again drove to Nicolosi but this time to a different locality where we could, at the same time, see a bit of the eruption of the volcano. Here we saw three *I. podalirius* and only one specimen of *Z. hysipyle*. The most common butterfly in this locality was the *Anth. ausonia*, however *P. icarus*, *G. alexis*, *L. phlaeas*, *A. agestis*, *C. pamphilus* and *Anth. cardamines* were also on the wing. *Anth. damone* appeared now and again but it was not so common as at Zafferana. By noon we had to pack up, as I was supposed to leave for Malta at 4.00 p.m. Thus my second visit to Mt. Etna came to an end, not as fruitful as the previous visit of 1970 when 38 different species were taken. It seemed that the season was retarded owing to the severe winter. No females of *Anth. Damone* were noticed. In 1970, a week earlier than this time, *M. jurtina hispulla*, *C. semiargus*, *Prygus armoricanus*, *Cartharodus alceae* and the wintering species were quite common in the same localities I visited this year.

When I reached the airport at Catania I found the last straw . . . a strike was on at the airport in Rome, and so the

plane had not arrived. After waiting up to 7.00 p.m. we were told that the flight to Malta had been cancelled, so the only alternative was to take the 10.00 p.m. boat from Syracuse to Malta.

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257 Msida Stret. B'Kara, Malta. 30th June, 1971

A Review of the Butterflies in the Bristol Area

By A. D. R. BROWN, F.R.E.S.

(Continued from page 216)

RIODINIDAE

Hamearis lucina Linn. (Duke of Burgundy Fritillary)

Although once widely distributed across the Cotswold escarpment, this species is now restricted to several specific localities. Two of these are known to the author, the first of which is threatened by sight-seers, since it is a typical beauty-spot overlooking the Severn Estuary and the mountains of Wales beyond. Picnickers trample down the breeding grounds on every sunny weekend, and never more than three butterflies have been noted on any one occasion. The other haunt of the Duke of Burgundy Fritillary is situated on the edge of a golf course where the grass is rarely cut, small conifer trees are planted at intervals and many unusual plants live here, including several species of Orchis. About a dozen butterflies were observed at this locality about two years ago, but the habitat is restricted, and is quite vulnerable.

We have a single record for the species from North Somerset, with eight butterflies being observed at Goblin Combe in May 1964, but despite frequent searches since that time, no other butterflies have been seen.

LYCAENIDAE

Aricia agestis Schiff. (Brown Argus)

As with the species just described, the Brown Argus is mainly confined to the western slopes of the Cotswold Hills in Gloucestershire, where its colonies are none too strong. At Kingsweston Down just to the north of Bristol, a few of these butterflies are seen each year, despite frequent clearing of the long grass.

In North Somerset the Brown Argus occurs in a wide variety of habitats, where it also flies in greater numbers. Once again, Goblin Combe is one of the strongholds, while